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ABSTRACT

A study examined how regular listening to oral reading by teachers affected fourth and sixth grade students' reading comprehension, attitudes towards reading, and time spent doing independent reading. Subjects, 221 students from six diverse school systems in Connecticut, were read to for 20 minutes, three times per week, for 12 weeks. Pre- and posttests were given using the Estes Scale To Measure Attitudes Toward Reading and the Degrees of Reading Power Test. Student time-logs were analyzed and the students were interviewed at the conclusion of the study. Results indicated that students exposed to oral reading have a better attitude toward reading, engage in more recreational reading, and scored better on reading comprehension tests than students not exposed. The results were further substantiated by the results of interviews and student logs. (Forty-one references and three figures of data are attached.) (RS)

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READING ALOUD TO INTERMEDIATE GRADE STUDENTS

Abstract

This study measured the effects of listening to oral reading by teachers three times a week for twelve weeks on the reading comprehension, attitudes toward reading, and time spent reading of two hundred twenty-one fourth and sixth graders in six different and diverse school systems in Connecticut. Pre and posttest results of the ESTES SCALE TO MEASURE ATTITUDES TOWARD READING, the DEGREES OF READING POWER TEST, and student time-logs were analyzed as repeated measures on the dependent and moderator variables using the ANOVA technique across each level of the factors. The subjects were also interviewed at the conclusion of the treatment.

The analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data supported each other. The final analysis resulted in statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups on the main effects. The results from this study suggest implications for reading instruction in the intermediate grades.

NOTE - Speech (Condensed version of doctoral dissertation) presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association (33rd, Toronto, Canada, May 1-6, 1988).

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT AND DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

A growing phenomenon in today's society is the child who seems to possess all the skills necessary to read but, for some reason, chooses not to read (Alexander, 1975; Alexander and Filler, 1976; Anderson, R., 1984; Boothroy, 1983; Briechle, 1984; Chan, 1972; Gatheral, 1981; Hillman, 1975; Hooper, 1984; Morrow and Weinstein, 1986; Perez, 1986; Spiegel, 1981; Trelease, 1982). In view of the fundamental American belief that respect for and active use of reading is critical to the success of our democratic society, educators and parents should guide youngsters into becoming readers by choice, rather than by coercion.

According to the Commission on Reading in Becoming A Nation of Readers (1984), reading aloud to students is credited as the "single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading" (p. 23). Comments on the positive connection between reading aloud to students regularly and their attitudinal and comprehension improvements abound in the professional literature, as well as the popular press (Briechle, 1984).

A literature search for a research base about the effects of reading aloud in the classroom reveals circular references with few

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sources based on actual research. Reading aloud appears to be accepted as useful by 'received wisdom' and opinion rather than by careful and controlled research. Thus, there is a need to base opinion and theory on scholarly research in the investigation of the effects of listening to oral reading by a teacher on the attitudes, recreational reading habits, and comprehension on intermediate grade students. Because youngsters beginning in Grade 4 generally do not read widely, although capable of it, conventional wisdom suggests that reading aloud to students will result in positive gains, since some research regarding pre-primary and primary age children indicate that oral reading is a worthwhile practice. Too date, there is very little empirical research in the middle grades to support this theory.

The purpose of this study was to measure the consequences of listening to a teacher read aloud on a regular basis on the attitudes, reading habits, and comprehension of students in Grades 4 and 6 in six diverse communities in Connecticut.

Purpose and Significance of the Problem

In this nation of forty-two million children, two out of every three youngsters can't read, won't read, or hates to read (Trelease, 1982). Some children cannot read because of the lack of ability. Some children do not read because of the lack of materials, but, as reading educators, we should also be concerned with the phenomenon that some children simply do not like to read (

; Greaney & Neuman, 1983; Spiegel, 1981).

In Becoming A Nation of Readers, the authors note that "reading is a basic life skill. It is the cornerstone for a child's success in school, and indeed, throughout life. Without the ability to read well, opportunities for personal fulfillment and job success inevitably will be lost" (1984, p. 1).

Reading is as important for society, as well as for the individual. Indeed, society is demanding and upgrading the level of literacy. The world is quickly moving into a technological-information age in which an increasing number of occupations require vast amounts of reading at a level far above that of functional literacy. Besides the need for reading in the workplace, it is essential for the continuation of our democratic ideals. Without the ability to read, an individual's responsibility to vote and become involved in our government is weakened.

If one agrees that it is important for children to foster positive feelings toward reading, develop voluntary reading habits, and increase their level of comprehension, then the reports that considerable numbers of students today choose not to read, despite their know-how, should be a major cause for concern.

Based on the limited research which exists in this area, reading comprehension and positive attitudes with an increase in voluntary reading share a strong relationship with listening to oral reading in the primary grades. This researcher and others propose, then, that it is theoretically sound to extend the concept of reading aloud from young children to those in the intermediate grades (Anderson, 1984; Briechle, 1984; Gatheral, 1981; Hillman,

1975; Harris & Sipay, 1972; Karlin , 1971; [illegible]; Painter, 1971; Willems, 1978).

Chall and Snow (1982) wrote that a major problem confronting educators today is the decline of the acquisition of further literacy beyond grade four. Holbrook (1985) cites a national assessment which shows a decline in reading proficiency and interest in reading beginning at grade four, and she suggests that reading aloud to students may be one solution to reverse that decline and promote further literacy. Chambers (1973) and Kimmel (1983) summarize the need to read aloud to children by theorizing that it will promote reading interest and increase independent reading for intermediate grade students, as it seemingly does for younger children.

But far too often, educators assume that once children know how to read, there is no longer a need to read orally to them. According to Hurst (1985), the ability to decipher words stops neither the need nor the desire to listen to adults reading aloud. For some students, it may still be a long time before they are motivated to or capable of reading books with enough fluency to derive meaning and pleasure from the experience. Since permanent reading habits develop between the ages of ten and twelve, it is crucial that educators do everything possible to instill a love and respect for reading in students during that time period (Lamme, 1976; Sloan, n.d.).

Extant research is limited to studies of reading aloud in the home, reading aloud to pre-primary and primary age children or reading aloud to reluctant and/or disadvantaged readers. The studies also measure only one variable - attitude or reading habits or comprehension - with one group of subjects within one location. This present study has extended the scope of previous studies and has filled a void in the literature by including a broader base of subjects with varying levels of reading ability from fourth and sixth grade classrooms in six diverse communities. The pretest-treatment-posttest design has yielded data which were analyzed by both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of regular listening to a teacher's oral reading on the attitudes, reading habits, and comprehension of fourth and sixth graders in six

communities in Connecticut. The study was designed to provide data on whether there are significant differences in the attitudes, habits, and comprehension test scores between students who were exposed to oral reading and those who were not. Specifically this study addressed the following questions:

1) **Will reading aloud to students in grades four and six on a regular basis influence their attitudes toward reading?**

The Estes Scale to Measure Attitudes Toward Reading and interview question-responses are the modes of measurement for question number one.

The perceptions of the listening experience by the experimental group subjects and their attitudes toward reading have been explored in depth by adopting the interview technique used in phenomenological studies (Barritt, Beekman, Bleeker, Mulderij, 1985; Bogland & Biklen, 1982). A coding system was developed by the researcher to detect words, phrases, and patterns of thinking, as well as irregularities, during the course of the study. The data have been analyzed for the essence of the groups' attitudes toward the listening experience and, consequently, towards reading in general. The readers employed for this study and some teachers, parents, and school librarians also co-rated the interview responses. During the treatment, the readers kept journals which further validated interview reactions. Since the measures on the scale and interview responses converged, there is greater confidence

in the outcome of this study (Smith, 1978; [illegible]; Forehand, 1966).

2) **Will reading aloud to students in grades four and six on a regular basis motivate them to spend more time on independent recreational reading?**

An examination of time-logs and lists of books read by students in both groups was the mode of measurement for question number two. At the beginning of the study, each subject was given a time-log in which to record the amount of time spent reading for pleasure (i.e., non-assigned recreational reading).

The intent was to note and analyze differences in time between the two groups at the culmination of the study; however, since only 52 out of 221 subjects conscientiously kept an accurate log of their time spent reading books during the twelve week duration of the study, it was reluctantly decided to use lists of books read by subjects in both groups as the indicator of differences in reading habits. Because books vary in length and difficulty, this may be a less accurate indication of the subjects' time spent on recreational reading; nevertheless, an analysis of variance between the experimental and control groups' time-logs and/or lists of books read yielded significant differences.

3) **Will reading aloud to students in grades four and six on a regular basis improve their comprehension scores on a conventional reading test?**

The Degrees of Reading Power test was the mode of measurement for question number three. This is a cloze test used to assess

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students' reading comprehension from grades three through twelve.

Hypotheses

In this study the directional hypotheses were stated in the null form for statistical analysis. The 0.05 level of confidence was selected for testing the null hypotheses which were all ultimately rejected after a repeated measure analysis of variance was performed on the data. The basic hypotheses are stated below in the order of the questions examined:

1) H_o: The attitude towards reading of students exposed to listening to oral reading by a teacher will be the same as or less than the attitudes of students not exposed to the listening experience.

   H_a: The attitudes towards reading of students exposed to listening to oral reading by a teacher is greater than those students not exposed to the listening experience ($p<0.05$).

2) H_o: The time spent on recreational reading by students exposed to listening to oral reading by a teacher will be the same as, or less than, the students not exposed to the listening experience.

   H_a: The time spent on recreational reading by students exposed to listening to oral reading

by a teacher will be greater than the students not exposed to the listening experience ($p<0.05$).

3) H_o: The reading comprehension test scores by students exposed to listening to oral reading by a teacher will be the same as, or less than, the students not exposed to the listening experience.

H_a: The reading comprehension test scores by students exposed to listening to oral reading by a teacher will be greater than the students not exposed to the listening experience ($p<0.05$).

Variables

The independent variable was the read aloud listening experience in which the experimental group participated. The dependent variables of attitude, time spent on recreational reading, and comprehension were measured to determine the effect of the independent variable. Reading level, community, grade, and gender were the moderator variables chosen to discover if they modified the effects of the independent variable on the dependent variables.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are offered for purposes of clarity and consistency in the usage of the above variables:

Oral reading/reading aloud - a teacher reads out loud from books to students in a classroom setting.

Attitude - a feeling, either positive, negative, or neutral, towards reading, regardless of the purpose of the reading.

Recreational reading - voluntary reading of self-selected materials, either for information or for pleasure (Spiegel, 1981).

Comprehension - the act of exploring and interpreting meaning from print (Vacca, 1981).

Procedures

The research procedures employed in this study are described briefly below.

A thorough review of the literature was conducted related to reading aloud to children in school and its effects on their attitudes, reading habits, and comprehension. For additional understanding of the topic, the researcher also investigated reading aloud to preschoolers in the home, modeling oral reading by parents and teachers, motivational factors related to reading achievement, the understanding of prior knowledge and story grammar on reading comprehension, the development of oral and written vocabulary, and listening comprehension. Professional journals, the ERIC files, and previous published and non-published dissertations were consulted.

After being convinced of the necessity of undertaking this study, the researcher then questioned intermediate grade teachers in southern New England about their reading aloud program in their

classes. Their responses indicated that this practice rarely takes place in schools today, which further validated the need for the present study to determine if, indeed, reading aloud to students is a worthwhile endeavor.

Next, the researcher then conducted a pilot study in a non-graded private elementary school. At the end of each read aloud session, the researcher discussed the experience with the subjects, who indicated that they were reading more books for recreational purposes and that they were beginning to value reading for its own sake and not as just another subject in school. The interview questions used in this study evolved from the conversations held with the students in the pilot study.

Descriptive statistics from the United States Census Bureau and the Connecticut State Department of Education Bureau of Research Planning and Evaluation were then consulted in an effort to find two closely matched small towns, two moderate size cities, and two large cities in which to carry out the treatment and evaluations. Formal permission was granted to the researcher by the proper administrators of the selected communities. Principals and teachers were next interviewed regarding the feasibility of the use of their classrooms and students for this research.

Since the study required a range of fourth grade students in a small town, moderate city, and large city schools and a range of sixth grade students in a closely matched small town, moderate city, and large city school, a stratified random sampling technique was employed in the selection of the subjects. Letters explaining the

purpose of the study and requesting parental approval were sent to the parents/guardians of each subject. The researcher began the study with a sample of two hundred twenty-one subjects but lost nine students during the course of the treatment due to relocation and/or chronic illnesses.

In the meantime, the researcher also consulted the literature for appropriate books to be read aloud and the proper techniques needed to carry out the treatment. The readers who were selected were all trained educators. The six permanent and two alternate readers were provided with a packet of information regarding the rationale behind this study, the techniques needed for effective oral reading, as well as, an annotated bibliography of titles appropriated for the read-aloud experience.

Both groups of subjects in each location were administered the Estes Scale to Measure Attitudes Toward Reading and the Degrees of Reading Power test, and they were taught how to accurately keep a record of recreational reading on the time-log form.

Next, the trained readers read aloud from fiction, nonfiction, and poetry selections listed in the annotated bibliography for three twenty-minute sessions per week for twelve weeks. The readers were also directed to keep a journal indicating the selections read, the students who participated, and any comments made during each session. The investigator remained in contact with the readers to assure that the treatment was carried out appropriately.

At the end of the treatment segment of the study, the researcher administered the posttests of the Estes Scale to Measure Attitudes Toward Reading and the Degrees of Reading Power test; interviewed the students and a random group of teachers, parents, and school librarians; and collected the time-logs and/or book lists.

Finally, tests of significance were applied using a one-, two-, three-, four-, and five-factor repeated measure analysis of variance techniques at the facilities of The University of Connecticut Computer Center. The researcher also employed the method of eidetic reduction to arrive at the essence of the interview responses.

Limitations and Delimitations of This Study

The following ten issues must be kept in mind during the course of further replications and generalizations of this study:

1) The boundaries, both in terms of time and locations, were limited. Ideally, the exposure of students to daily oral reading would have been more appropriate; however, scheduling by the school administrators and teachers, and readers made this impossible. If the regular classroom teachers had been selected to read orally, then this problem would have been reduced, but then teacher bias would have added another dimension to the study. Therefore, the researcher felt more confident with regards to the outcome of the study by hiring outside readers to conduct the treatment.

2) Since the subjects within each site were drawn from a pool of students from the same school, there were many opportunities for subjects from both groups to discuss the treatment. This was verified by some of the responses of the control group subjects. No control for conversation between subjects was made, however, the multi-site design helped to reduce this problem somewhat.

3) There is always the possibility that the significant results could be attributed to the novelty or special treatment by the readers on the experimental group subjects and not because of the superiority of the treatment over conventional classroom reading instruction. It is difficult to separate this Hawthorne Effect from the dependent/moderator variables.

4) Significant results may be partially due to the influence of the classroom teachers' attitudes regarding this study. In at least one location, the classroom teacher also began to read aloud to the students; therefore, the treatment could only be regarded as additional exposure to oral reading.

5) The researcher did not have complete control over the reading materials. Each reader received a detailed annotated bibliography from which to select books, but the ultimate decision of materials was left to the readers and the subjects at each location. If each reader had been assigned a specific book to read over a specific amount of time, then the control would have been tighter but different problems might have occurred. For example, the reader might not have been comfortable with the selection and unable to read it to his/her best ability. Also, there would have

been the possibility that the subjects already read or heard the same book and would not want to listen to it again. After weighing both sides of this control issue, the researcher decided to leave the choice of selections open-ended, but within the general framework of the annotated bibliography. Each reader, however, was required to read a balanced number of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry selections.

6) Attrition was a problem, too. When nine subjects were repeatedly absent and/or moved from the school district, they were eliminated from the final analysis. Experimental subjects in one location were also read to by two different readers, when the original reader was unable to continue due to illness.

7) The reliability and validity of the time-logs is questionable. As already stated, the majority of students failed to complete the time-logs; however, they did hand in a list of books read during the duration of the treatment. Despite the fact that parents were asked to sign the time-logs, their accuracy is difficult to verify. Although a few parents at each site were interviewed, it was impossible to monitor each subject with regards to actual time spent reading independently.

8) The last limitation of this study is one of life in general. It is virtually impossible to control for and measure every variable. For example, the home influence and prior experience to listening to oral reading were uncontrolled variables in this study.

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9) Although this study involved two different grade levels in six different communities, the results can only be generalized to those students who participated in the study. Further research of more grade levels and classes in different locations is needed before this researcher, or any other, can generalize the results to all students in the intermediate grades.

10) The twelve week time period was another delimitor: a shorter or longer period of time may have yielded different results.

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CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Analytical Techniques Utilized

In order to test the above hypotheses, a five-way repeated measure analysis of variance procedure was employed to examine the main effects at time-1 and time-2 and their main effects. This design permitted the researcher to analyze the three dependent variables across levels of the following moderator variables: (a) gender, (b) grade, (c) community, and (d) reading level. Only by examining the means obtained for each cell in the research design could information regarding the hypotheses stated be provided for each variable. In the subsequent discussion, the results obtained with regard to the hypothesis for each of the variables selected for analysis are provided. Each null hypothesis is tested at the 0.05 level of significance as recommended by authorities in the field of statistics (Cook and Campbell, 1979; Hinkle, Wiersma, and Jurs, 1979; Huck, Cormier, and Bounds, 1974; Keppel, 1982; Milliken & Johnson, 1984; Norusis, 1985; Stanley, 1967). The facilities of The University of Connecticut Computer Center were used to generate the statistical analysis from the SPSS-X Subprograms: Analysis of Variance, Repeated Measure, Multiple Analysis of Variance, and Simple Effects Analysis (Norusis, 1985).

Since reading is an example of cognitive and affective skills, the researcher evaluated it accordingly through the phenomenological technique of eidetic reduction based on interview and journal transcriptions. The real-world behavior provided the study with credible and pervasive evidence in conjunction with the quantitative analysis of measurements. Since the measures on the

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attitude scale and interview responses converged, the investigator had greater confidence in the outcome of the study with regards to accurate instrumentation of reading attitudes of the sample (Smith, 1978; [illegible]; Forehand, 1966).

Hypothesis 1

To determine whether the treatment had a differential impact on the experimental and control groups, mean scores were calculated.

An analysis of the means and standard deviations indicates that both groups were equivalent at the onset of the study.

Data obtained from the administration of this measurement immediately before (time 1) and after (time 2) the treatment were analyzed by a repeated measure of analysis of variance that included the following terms and all the interactions between them: (a) pretest means, (b) posttest means, (c) experimental group means, (d) control group means, (e) gender, (f) grade, (g) community, and (h) reading levels. An ANOVA of the experimental group and control group interaction between time 1 and time 2 is significant indicating the treatment did effect the subjects' scores ($F = 4.609$, $df = 1$, $p<0.05$); thereby, permitting the researcher to reject the null hypothesis for question one. An analysis of interactions between the moderating variables did not yield any statistically significant effects.

The graph in App. A visually depicts the spread of means between the pre and posttest of the Estes Scale To Measure Attitudes Toward Reading.

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Hypothesis 2

To substantiate the attitude measure of Hypothesis 1, the researcher requested that the subjects record the amount of time they spent - in minutes - on non-assigned reading. This was done because scores on the attitude test might have been influenced by individual attitudes toward specific items on the instrument and by the willingness of the subjects to cooperate and suggest an opinion thought to be popular by the researcher and/or classroom teachers.

To determine whether the treatment had a differential impact on the experimental and control groups, mean scores were calculated.

In both the pre and posttest measures, the control group read for less time than the experimental group. Further examination of the means indicated that above average readers read more than any other group at time 1 and the experimental group had more above average readers in it than the control group. This difference did not pose a problem because in the final analysis, the experimental group reading time was statistically significant as compared to the control group.

Since there were not enough subjects (N = 52), a three-way ANOVA was run to determine the effects of the treatment on the experimental and control group and interactions between the gender, grade, community and reading levels. Although the researcher repeatedly attempted to run a five-way ANOVA, the computer suppressed the highest order interaction; consequently the analysis of interaction must be regarded with caution. The only significant difference was between the main effects of the experimental and control groups.

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therefore, permitting the researcher to reject the null hypothesis 2 ($F = 5.694$, $df = 1$, $p<0.05$). The graph in Figure 2 visually illustrates the post-treatment differences, despite the variability between the groups at the onset of the study. Throughout the treatment, the amount of time spent on recreational reading by the control group remained the same, and is represented by the flat line in the graph.

Only 52 subjects followed through on the completion of the time-logs, so the investigator requested that the subjects record the amount of books they read for pleasure during the twelve weeks of the study. This measurement lacked control because it was based on the subjects' memories and could not be validated for accuracy, for example, by parents' signatures. However, as will be seen in a later discussion [illegible] interview responses did indicate increased reading by the experimental group. Since the number of books read by each student was not recorded prior to the treatment, only means of books read by each group at the end of the treatment were determined.

In the analysis of books read, the same problem arose with the hypothesis 2 analysis of time-logs, that is, the suppression of variables due to the small N. Community was removed and the resulting 4-way ANOVA indicated a significant difference between the experimental group and control group with regards to the treatment ($F = 36.785$, $df = 1$, $p<0.05$); therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

A significant difference also resulted in group by reading level interaction and group by gender interaction; so a post hoc Tukey test was performed in an effort to discover where the differences layed.

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The results of the Tukey Test indicated that more females in the experimental group than males in the same group were effected by the treatment and more above average readers than below average readers in the experimental group were effected. (Refer to Appendix B.)

Hypothesis 3

A comparison of the group means on the DRP lest on moderating variables at the pretest administration (time 1) showed slightly higher scores for girls, students in small towns, and subjects who read above average. A comparison of the experimental versus control group subjects, though, showed similar means; consequently the researcher was confident that both groups were equal prior to the treatment with respect to comprehension scores of the Degrees of Reading Power test.

Furthermore, the subjects in this study also achieved similar scores as their peers in the statewide administration of the DRP test - different form - given several weeks after the pretest in this study.

A 5-way ANOVA on the following levels were performed on these data: (a) pretest means, (b) posttest means, (c) experimental group means, (d) control group means, (e) gender means, (f) grade means, (g) community means, and (h) reading level means. The effect due to the treatment was statistically significant ($F = 3.813$, $df = 1$, $p<0.05$).

In addition, the analysis did not yield significant effects due to the treatment between moderating variables thereby indicating a lack of interaction between the groups with the

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other variables. Results from the simple effects test permitted the researcher to reject the null hypothesis with regard to comprehension test scores. Since a significant difference lay between the main effects only, the researcher cannot conclude significance between levels of the moderator variables; therefore, a post hoc test was not performed. Once again the results of the treatment on the experimental and control groups between time 1 and time 2 are depicted on a graph in Appendix C.

Discussion of Statistical Analysis

According to Cook and Campbell (1979) the design of this present study is experimental utilizing the pretest-treatment-posttest format for both groups. The only exception to this is the lack of reliable information about the number of books read prior to the treatment by both groups. Due to the stratified random sampling of the groups, it can be safely assumed that violations of internal and external validity did not pose a problem. The researcher cautions readers, though, to limit the generalization of this study to only those subjects who participated in this research and to keep in mind that reactive external validity may be questionable due to the novelty of the treatment for most subjects.

Interpretation of the lack of interactions, except with gender and reading levels by books read by experimental group, must be treated with care. Due to the small cell numbers, a heteogeneity of variance violated an assumption of the ANOVA. The inability to perform a 5-way

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ANOVA posed problems with regard to error term and the inability to perform post hoc analysis (Milliken and Johnson, 1984).

The unequal numbers in each cell were also a concern:

Experimental	=	112
Control	=	100
Males	=	103
Females	=	109
Grade 4	=	116
Grade 6	=	96
Above-average reading level	=	59
Average reading level	=	72
Below-average reading level	=	81
Small town	=	59
Medium city	=	71
Large city	=	82

Nevertheless, Keppel (1982) states that the SPSS-X Program performs an analysis of unweighed means which applies an average sample size equally to all the conditions in the calculation of the sums of the squares for the factorial effects. Thus, regardless of the underlying size of the sample, each mean contributes equally to the factorial effects. The harmonic means of N was performed with the Tukey post hoc tests to control for unequal numbers in the analysis of gender by experimental group and reading levels by experimental group with regards to the number of books read.

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Eidetic Reduction

An analysis of the interview and journal transcripts provided credible and pervasive evidence to substantiate the results of the above statistical results. The process of triangulation with an aggregate of measurements facilitated a total picture of the effects of reading aloud to students on a regular basis.

Through eidetic reduction, a methodological path "which leads back to the irreducible and fundamental - the essence of the experience" (Atkinson, 1977, p. 266), the data in this study was reduced four times according to the following format:

1) Natural attitude - significant words, ideas, feelings were grouped under two headings
   A) Noema - objective perceptions, statements about events which occurred during the treatment
   B) Noesis - subjective perceptions, statements about thoughts, feelings, opinions, perceptions
2) Phenomenologic attitude - results from part 1 were coded into categories and then further analyzed for congruence
3) Eidetic analysis - themes were reduced into single statements for each subject's perception of the treatment
4) Summary - eidetic statements were further reduced to represent the essence of the entire sample

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Each interview question and journal notation will be treated separately in the next section

Question #1

What did you think about listening to stories and poems read to by (name of reader) during these past twelve weeks?

Words and phrases used for this question which fall into noema reduction include:

"learned new words like 'tessering,'"

"finally met Ramona Quimby,"

"even though I still had my work to finish, it was a good way to spend twenty minutes."

Every student, except one, used additional words to describe their feelings and opinions about the experience.

"Great,"

"fine idea,"

"super,"

"really nice"

were uttered over and over again. These comments can be grouped under noesis reduction along with such statements as,

"reading became more interesting,"

"learned to interpret books differently,"

"books became alive,"

"got to know characters like they were my friends,"

"more kids should have this,"

"thought it would be babyish but it wasn't,"

"made pictures in my mind,"

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"time to relax, think, and understand,"

"learned to listen better,"

"so involved with the story, that it was hard to get back to the real world,"

"even though I already knew some of the books, I understood them differently now."

The phenomenologic attitude deducted from the above comments elicited a positive feeling about the experience of listening to stories read aloud. The sole child who was critical of the program, qualified his feelings by saying he needed that time period to complete his homework, since he was unable to ever do it at home. The interviewer noted that all the favorable statements cut across each variable without any one segment of the sample being more or less positive. The only difference noticed was in several remarks from sixth graders whose initial feelings about the project was a sense of babyishness - but later they all changed their minds. In summary, for Question #1, the experience of listening to books read aloud by a teacher on a regular basis was very positive for the listeners.

Question #2

After listening to a story or poem, did you want to read the same story or poem over again to yourself? Did you want to read something else written by the same author? Why or why not?

Noemic reduction was further verified by checking the book lists submitted by the subjects when they claimed that they did read many of the same books over again by themselves that they had listened to read out loud. Many students described in elaborate detail their favorite

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books when asked this question, and they continued to say that by hearing the story they became interested in the topic. Several children enjoyed a book about dinosaurs which spurred them on to read more books about those ancient reptiles. After hearing a biography about a sports hero, a sixth grade boy, who was dubbed as a non-reader by his teacher, said that he wanted to read more biographies about sports figures. Subjective perceptions by the group included comments like

> "reread every book over again because they were so great to hear out loud,"
>
> "bought two of the books at the school book fair,"

and

> "talked my sister into borrowing books by the same author from the library."

Teacher and reader remarks reinforced these findings; therefore, it can safely be concluded that students independently read the same books they listened to read aloud by a teacher.

Question #3

> Do you ever read aloud to anyone? Why or why not? If not, do you ever want to read aloud to anyone?

One noemic theme that was echoed by at least half of the subjects was that they wished their parents would read to them at home. Their parents rarely, if ever, read to them because they either do not have the time or they feel that the student can read by him/herself. Time and time again, students expres disappointment in their parents' attitudes. Closely related to this, was a request that their teachers

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continue the read aloud program. When directed back to their own oral reading, phrases like

"that's a good idea"

and

"if I had younger brothers and sisters or cousins, I would read to them"

were commonly heard, so were grouped under noesis reduction. Other statements included,

"I never did before, but I think I will read out loud to someone now,"

"I read to myself and tape it and send it my blind grandmother - I'm reading the same book that (name of reader) is reading to us,"

"(Name of teacher) lets me read to the first graders now during in-door recess."

The only difference between groups which the interviewer noticed was that more sixth grade girls admitted to reading out loud to younger children than any other subgroup within the sample. That can probably be explained by the fact that many sixth grade girls babysit; whereas the fourth graders are generally too young for that activity, and the boys are either not interested or not asked to babysit. In summary, the participants of the study express a desire to read out loud and saw a value in sharing oral literature.

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Question #4

Do you ever read anything to yourself in your spare time that is not assigned to you by your teacher(s)? If yes, do you spend more or less time reading for fun now that (name of reader) has been visiting your classroom?

This question was closely related to the last two. The students reported that they reread books read orally even though they were not assigned to do so, and that they would like to read out loud to someone else given the opportunity to do so. Sixth grade replies differed in the number of students in all sites who expressed an interest in reading poetry once they were introduced to it in the read aloud sessions. As several students remarked,

"it's nice to listen to a poem to enjoy it without having to learn it, write it, analyze it, and all those other things we do in language arts class,"

"I've never hear much poetry because the teachers usually skip that part in the basals,"

"it's easier to read poetry out loud like (name of reader) did, because the poems she read had rhythm like music,"

"I never knew that I liked poetry until I heard (name of reader) read them; it's different than when I hear them in my head if I read it."

When asked if they read more now than before the read aloud sessions began, the majority of students noted that they do. Those who admitted to not reading any more than usual explained that they

are too busy in sixth grade with extra homework, sports, paper routes, and babysitting. No one mentioned watching television as an excuse not to read.

Question #5

What do you think about reading instruction in school, either this year or in the past?

This question elicited the most comments from all the subjects. Objective statements included,

"I want to select my own books for book reports,"

"I need more time to talk about books with friends,"

"I want to be in a lower reading group because the stories seem more interesting,"

"I want time to read R.I.F. books in school, because I can't read them at home,"

"I would like to read the books I want to, even if a teacher has to okay them, instead of boring workbook pages. Oh, I might do them now and then if it was something I didn't understand or needed extra practice in like with syllables, but I can't stand doing pages about things I already know - boring."

Sixth grade subjects were more willing to express feelings about reading instruction in school with statements such as

"reading would be more interesting if I could read for fun,"

"I'd probably learn more if I could read what I want to,"

"I want more time to read and less time to work - there's a difference, you know,"

"I want my teacher to read out loud everyday like (name of reader) did, and not just because I want to get out of doing other things - there's time for everything,"

"I can't remember the last time I really learned anything important in a reading group."

As a whole, the fourth grade students seemed more accepting with the status quo, except in one school which had just recently begun a sustained silent reading program. The fourth graders interviewed at that location all expressed an interest in expanding the sustained silent reading program from its present one day to more days weekly. In summary, sixth grade students are willing to learn about reading if the activity seems relevant, and all the students would like more opportunities to read for pleasure in school and/or listen to a teacher read orally on a regular basis.

Question #6

Is there anything else you would like to say to me about your experience of listening to (name of reader) read out loud to you?

Although many of the students were hesitant to speak about the experience at the beginning of the interview, all of them were more willing to express their opinion of the experience by the time the interviewer reached the last question. Noamic statements included

"call up my parents and ask them to read to me,"

"read more now when I'm bored,"

"read more now at night,"

"read more now even when there is something good 'on',"

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"like mysteries now since (name of reader) read us (name of book),"

"no time to read for fun now because of homework and things but I will during vacation,"

"able to listen to books that are too hard for me now, but I'll remember them and read them when I can,"

"listening gives me more time to wonder about things happening in the story,"

"eyes and brain - the part that does the reading - are relaxed so my mind can imagine,"

"the books had more things happen in them than in the baby books my first grade teacher read out loud and she was the only one to do that so I guess it was okay even if they were baby books."

Words and phrases used which fall into noesis reduction were,

"reading is more interesting now - before it really was a waste of time,"

"characters are like real people, but I never knew that before,"

"other kids should do this too,"

"I like reading more now,"

"characters are like friends now,"

"good to hear voices of characters read out loud - it makes them seem so real,"

"I'm usually so worried about not knowing a word and getting stuck when I read, but listening to books is good and now I'll read the same book and get the idea of it,"

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"so relaxing and, you know, I never relaxed in school before in my whole life."

The majority of students concluded their remarks with a question to the interviewer:

"Can (name of reader) continue reading to us?"

The phenomenologic attitude replies to Question #6 indicated that reading out loud to students is a worthwhile activity because they become motivated to read more by themselves, they understand the stories and poems better, they encounter new forms of literature, they improve listening skills, and they meet many new friends vicariously through books.

In every case, the classroom teachers and librarians who were interviewed affirmed the students' interview replies. Several parents also called the investigator to comment that their child enjoyed the experience, although the child was skeptical at first, but now seemed to be reading more as a result of the experience. One mother of a sixth grader excitedly exclaimed that for the first time ever, her son finally read a book to its conclusion in order to find out what would happen before the reader reached that part during the read aloud session.

An analysis of the readers' journals conducted in the eidetic reduction mode arrived at the same conclusion. The readers wrote the following comments in their journals,

"the children brought the same books at their book fair that I had already read to them,"

"many rushed to the library to take out the sequel to the book I had just completed,"

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"some of the listeners became addicted to (name of character in a series book),"

"they became spellbound while I read (name of book),"

"the children developed their favorite listening positions and would sit without moving during the entire twenty minutes,"

"the kids interrupted their recess when they saw me drive into the parking lot to ask me to start reading earlier today,"

"if a child missed a session, the others would willingly fill in where I left off,"

"some of the girls started to read over my shoulder by the third week,"

"they were on the edge of their seats waiting to hear the ending,"

"I couldn't believe it - and neither could (name of classroom teacher) when the students actually memorized a poem that I had read to them and they greeted me with it when I entered the classroom today - no one told them to do that,"

"several times I read over the time limit because the suspense was killing them, and me too,"

"after a few weeks, the students would gather their chairs in a circle around me to listen better,"

"as I progressed, I began to notice that they could summarize the story read so far - much better than when we

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began and when I asked them at the beginning of each session to tell the group what we had heard so far,"

"many students asked me to repeat new or unusual words."

One of the readers concluded her journal by writing,

"I think these kids are finally getting the point that reading is an adventure, sad, happy, fun, exciting, silly, funny, serious. Books can make you feel."

The investigator also observed many of the same behaviors recognized by the readers, teachers, school librarians, and parents. During one posttest session, the reader quietly entered the classroom to return her journal. As soon as the students noticed her, they started to applaud and asked her to read a story. In another case, both the experimental and control groups were posttested in a large classroom in which the moveable walls were retracted. When the experimental group subjects completed the test, they voluntarily took a book out of their desks and began to read. Many of the books were the same ones which the reader had used. The classroom teachers of the experimental subjects all noted that the students started to read more upon completion of assignments within a few weeks after the treatment had commenced. None of the control group exhibited the same behavior.

Secondary effects of programs are often overlooked during evaluation of their worth. Some of these effects include teacher attitudes toward a program and non-participating student behaviors. At the beginning of the experiment, several teachers exhibited skepticism toward the investigation because, as they said "the whole

thing seems like a waste of time on kids who already know how to read." Their negativism was reversed by the end of the study. One teacher confided in the researcher that she already planned to continue the project by inviting guest readers, like the mayor, superintendent of schools, secretarial and custodial help, and parents. Although not involved in the interview process, some of the control group subjects asked the researcher if they could have a turn listening to stories too, because their friends had told them how interesting and enjoyable the experience had been.

. Findings of the Study

Statistical analysis of the data revealed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups, thereby allowing the researcher to reject the three null hypotheses. The researcher is 95% confident that the acceptance of the following alternate hypotheses is accurate:

1) H_a: The attitudes toward reading of students exposed to listening to oral reading by a teacher is greater than those students not exposed to the listening experience ($p<0.05$).

2) H_a: The time spent on recreational reading by students exposed to listening to oral reading by a teacher is greater than the students not exposed to the listening experience ($p<0.05$).

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3) H_a: The reading comprehension test scores by students exposed to listening to oral reading by a teacher is greater than the students not exposed to the listening experience ($p<0.05$).

These findings are further substantiated by the results of the interview and journal transcriptions. The specific conclusions about the experimental group elicited through eidetic reduction of the data are:

1) enjoyed the experience of listening to the teacher read to them,
2) were motivated to read more books in their free time,
3) were encouraged to reread the same books, or books written by the same author, they heard,
4) recognized the value of oral reading,
5) understood that different interpretations of a selection is appropriate,
6) relished meeting new characters and hearing unfamiliar words, and
7) learned to appreciate poetry.

Unfortunately, the cell means of the moderating variables were similar; therefore, the researcher was unable to draw any conclusions about the interaction of experimental and control groups by gender by community, by grade by reading level. The only exception was a statistical difference between the books read in the above average reading level with the below average reading level in the experimental group and between boys and girls in the same group. In light of the

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data analysis from this study, it is impossible to make recommendations regarding which specific groups, if any, benefit most from the treatment.

Suggestions for Further Research

The limitations of this study in terms of subjects and the lack of generalization to other populations suggest the need for further research to investigate the effects of an oral reading program on students' attitudes, time spent reading, and comprehension growth:

1) utilize a similar research design using different subjects in different communities to determine if the findings of this study are consistent,

2) utilize a similar research design using different stories and poems to determine if the treatment is transferrable to other written materials,

3) exercise more control over the activities of the control group in an effort to discover specifically what can be reduced or eliminated from the reading curriculum,

4) develop a follow-up study using the same subjects to determine if the changes in attitude, reading habits, and comprehension are maintained over time,

5) explore the effects of school sponsored programs to teach parents and educators how and what to read orally.

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Concluding Remarks

This study has attempted to continue the neverending quest, for improved educational practices and instructional techniques that will provide high quality education for all students, by expanding the existing theoretical base and filling in the research gaps regarding the influence of reading aloud to students in the intermediate grades.

Admittedly, reading aloud to students on a regular basis will not solve all the problems of learning how to read and maintaining the habit of voluntary reading for every child, but it may be one of the most important paths towards creating a more literate society. The results of this study suggest that improvements in students' attitudes, comprehension, and time spent reading is not only possible through an oral reading program, but can be achieved without a great outlay of time, money, and effort. Hopefully conclusions derived from this investigation may be used to provide direction for implementing programs for teachers and parents on the value of oral reading in the classroom.

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FIGURE 1

Time by Treatment Group: ESTES SCALE TO MEASURE ATTITUDES TOWARD READING

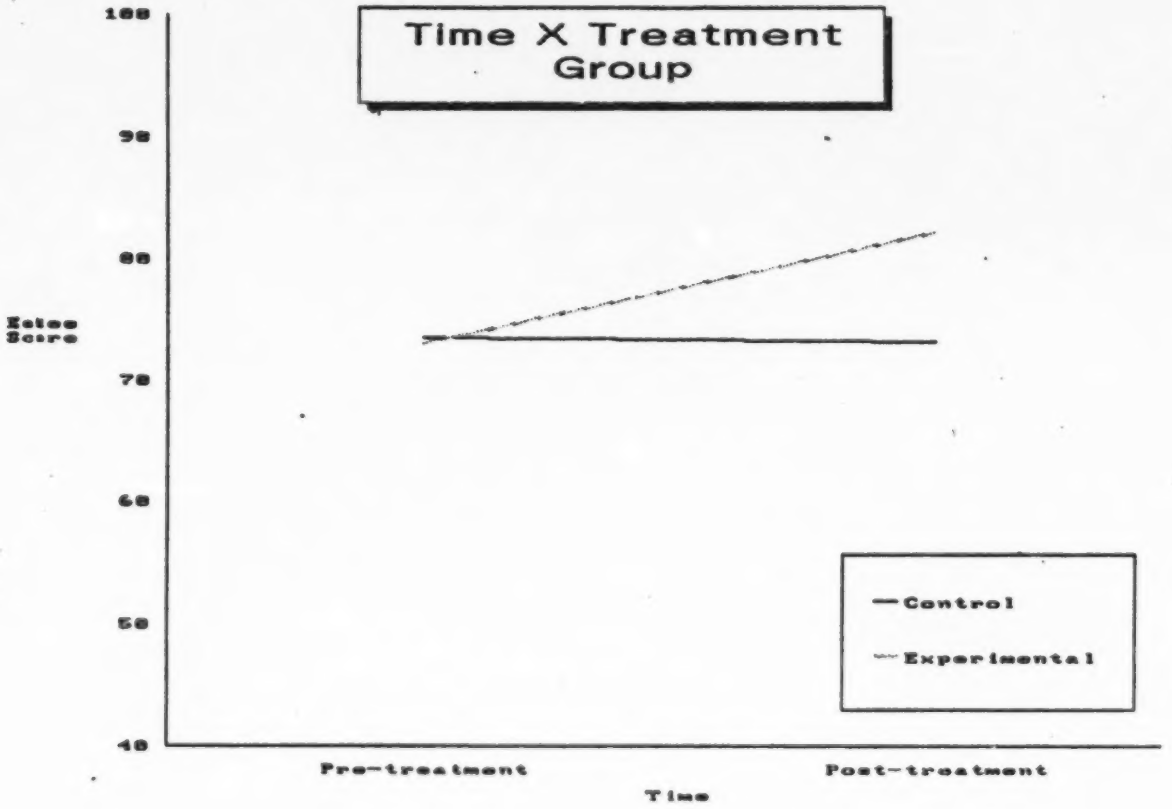

FIGURE 2

Time by Treatment Group: Reading Time

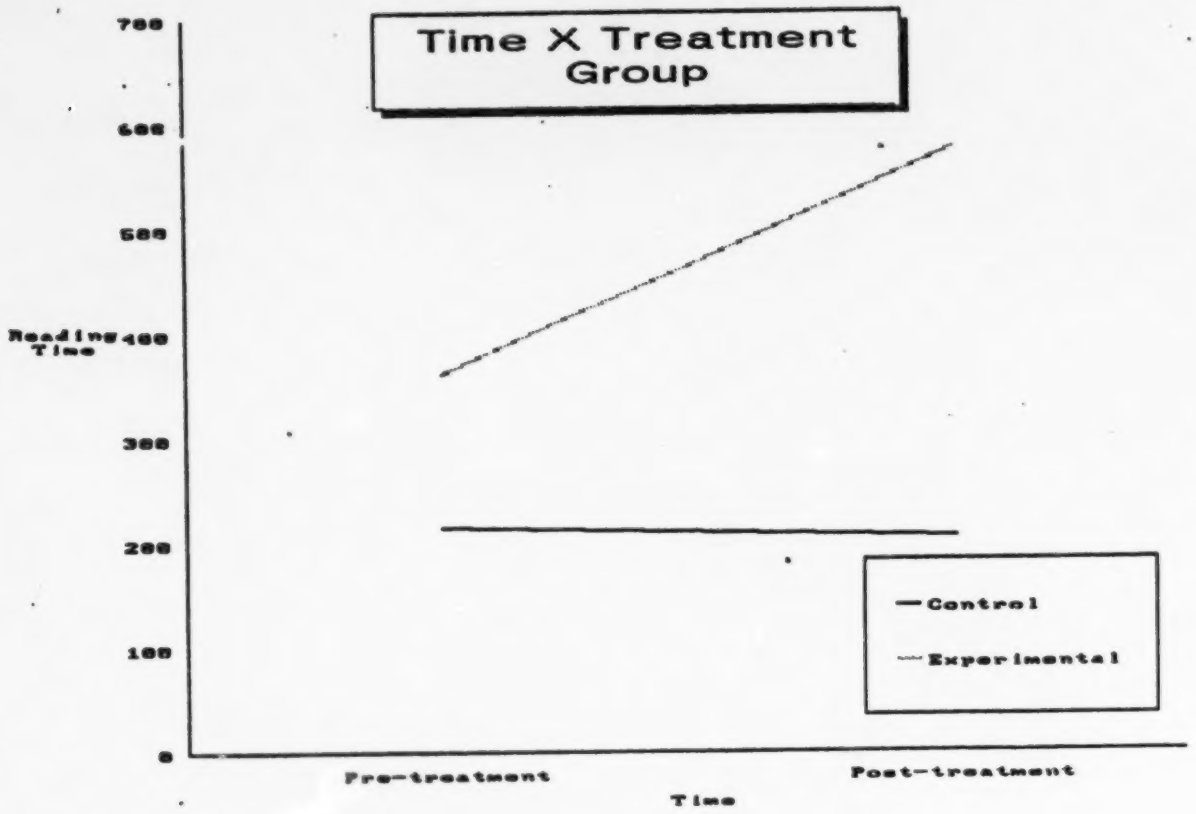

FIGURE 3

Time by Treatment: DEGREES OF READING POWER TEST